



NOAA CORPS BULLETIN

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FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Nearly 200 years ago, when the United States Survey of the Coast was first formed, no one could have imagined that one day shorelines would be charted from the sky to ensure the greatest accuracy. In today's world, however, shoreline mapping is just one of the many missions flown by NOAA Corps pilots at the Aircraft Operations Center.

This year marks the centennial anniversary of the Wright brothers' first flight. From that historic beginning, aircraft have evolved to perform tasks as straightforward as passenger transport and as complex as NOAA's meteorological data collection. Aircraft now comprise an essential component of NOAA as the agency fulfills its mission to gather environmental data. By conducting snow surveys, marine mammal surveys, hurricane and atmospheric research, remote sensing, and other airborne science missions, NOAA Corps officers and the Aircraft Operations Center provide vital support to NOAA.

The Aircraft Operations Center was born the Research Flight Facility (RFF) in 1961 as part of the U.S. Weather Bureau's National Hurricane Research Project. The Project funded the acquisition of two Douglas DC-6 aircraft, a B-57A and a DC-4 to support its multifaceted atmospheric research programs, which included the early attempts to modify hurricanes. Until the mid-1970s, RFF's aircraft, operating from Miami International Airport, engaged in many atmospheric research projects that spanned the globe. In 1975 the facility was combined with a unit from the Environmental Research Laboratories to form the Research Facilities Center (RFC). To replace its aging aircraft, the RFC acquired two new WP-3D Orions B in the mid-1970s. These aircraft are still in use today. In 1983 the Office of Aircraft Operations (OAO) was created to consolidate all of the aviation assets operated by NOAA.

In January 1993 the OAO was designated the Aircraft Operations Center (AOC) and moved to MacDill AFB in Tampa, Florida. AOC directly supports NOAA's mission by providing scientists with unique platforms to precisely observe, measure and chart the dynamics of oceans and our atmosphere.

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